

*griffith - History*TOWN OF GRIFFITH, INDIANA

The community is served directly by State Road 73. Other routes, as well as the close proximity of the community to state roads 41 and 30 and the new toll road, provide the major facilities used by the five interstate and 14 interstate truck lines that service the community.

Geographic conditions, while contributing directly to the growth and prosperity of the community by providing conditions whereby a complex transportation system has developed, have also caused safety problems that are of concern to civic and school officials. Transportation, especially motor transportation, has created problems pertaining to the construction and maintenance of streets faster than civil officials have been able to solve them.

HISTORY

Shortly after the first railroads were built in that portion of Lake County, now known as Griffith, Jay Dwiggins and Co., then of Chicago, founded the town of Griffith. These roads were built during the period from 1880 and 1888, and it was during this time the town was founded. The community was largely a working man's and railroad town. It contained the usual complement of stores and churches. The community has experienced irregular growth and prosperity. During the early 90's the community grew quite rapidly, but this trend was reversed in the early twentieth century and the community contained only about five hundred persons in the early 1920's.

It is always interesting to learn more about the history of the region in which one lives. The following excerpts of a letter from R. H. Young to Sam Woods, dean of Lake County Historians, is reproduced herein. It was written by an eye witness to the town's early struggles.

"I was born in Chicago when it was only a mud hole with only three paved streets--State, Wells and Lake St. In 1873, my father bought a farm that is now the gravel pit. There were no roads in Griffith in 1884. We petitioned and opened the Miller road. Later came John Miller who built a saloon and Jake Miller built his shoe store in 1886.;

In 1891, the Knotts Bros. sub-divided south of the railroad and a few factories sprung up like, Williams Wooden Ware, Ricketts Brass factory, Potters Foundry, and Rau Lantern Factory. Buildings went up like mushrooms. The Dwiggins' used to charter a train on Sunday to bring investors from Chicago. In 6 months, however, the town went broke, the factories were torn down.

Say, do you know that you couldn't walk across the marsh where the city hall is now? You would sink to your knees. Only in July and August when the water would dry up, could one walk there. Now it is the principal part of town."

Griffith is an unusual town because it is hemmed in on every side by other towns and cannot expand in area. It is a normal town, so far as the problems of its schools are concerned. It is a rapidly growing community and has considerable unimproved land upon which new residences are being built. Because the town is confined to its present area, it must learn to live within a tax base which is not only limited, but probably inadequate for school and community needs.

Griffith is located in the extreme southwestern corner of Calumet Township, Lake County, Indiana. Lake County is the northwestern county of the state and includes much of the highly industrialized Calumet Region. The northwest portion of Griffith, is adjacent to Highland, in effect a continuation of Chicago on the southwest.

The area included in Griffith is generally in the form of a reverse "L". It is approximately four miles long north-south along the upright portion of the reverse "L" and about two miles wide east-west along the base of the "L". It includes an area of approximately six square miles.

The street known as Ridge Road, a part of U.S. Highway 6, runs east and west across the north portion of the town along a ridge. With the exception of this ridge running east and west across the north portion of the town, the incorporated territory is relatively flat and some areas is so low that filling is necessary before residences are constructed. On occasion, the Little Calumet River, which determines the north-west limits of the incorporated area for all practical purposes, has overflowed much of the territory between the river and the ridge. The Cady Marsh Ditch, also in the north portion of the town but south of the ridge, has also contributed to the development problem.

Rail transportation in the area now known as Griffith, is older than the town itself. Transportation has played a major role in the establishment, growth and development of the town. The Erie, the Grand Trunk and the Elgin Belt Line railroads were all completed between 1880 and 1888. Griffith has referred to as the grade crossing of Lake County. There are at the present time, five railroads that cross the incorporated limits of the town. In addition to the three mentioned, these also include the Chesapeake and Ohio, and the New York Central.

PUBLIC POWER--

Electrical power is furnished by the Northern Indiana Public Service Co., through an interconnected transmission system.

The water system was originally installed in 1920 and was municipally owned and operated. During the last five years, Griffith's population grew so rapidly because of the migration of the workers from the crowded industrial centers, and the water facilities became inadequate. During the hot summer months, the pressure became low and became a problem. Though another well was driven, this still was inadequate. The Hobart Water Works was finally employed. They receive their water from Lake Michigan and service the town.

SCHOOL SYSTEM --

The city schools are administered by a board of education, the members of which serve three-year terms. They are appointed by the town council, one member being appointed every three years. This policy provides experienced membership on the board at all times. The board meets in the office of the city superintendent of schools and keeps files there.

The Griffith board employs a Superintendent of Schools, who has his office in the Franklin Elementary School. For the high school building, there is employed a principal who has no teaching responsibilities. There is also employed, a principal for the elementary school. He, too, has no teaching duties.

The Griffith High School holds a first class commission from the Indiana State Department of Public Instruction and is a member of the North Central Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools.

At present, they are building another elementary school to accomodate the increase in enrollment of elementary age. Up to now, Highland (the adjoining town), had been sending their children to Griffith High School. They have built a high school and are gradually absorbing the incoming Highland children, making more room in the Griffith High School.

There is also a Catholic Elementary school helping ease the enrollment problem.

BOOKS AND REFERENCES FOR THE TOWN OF GRIFFITH

Howat, William

A Standard History of Lake County & Calumet Region
The Leivis Publishing Co., Chicago, ILL 1905

Indiana Industial Directory

Indiana State Chamber of Commerce, Indianapolis, IND, 1954-55 Edition

Decenial Census (date: Date)

Number of Inhabitants in Census of Population, Vol 1
United States Printing Office

Indiana Industrial Directory

A Cooperative Study of the Public Schools of Griffith

Engineering Report and Water Works Improvement of 1956

James E. Welsch, Clerk-treasurer of town; Bill Kussmall, Town Marshall;
Jake Switcher, Fire Captain.

TOWN OF GRIFFITH, INDIANA

BOND FUND

1. Payment of Interest on Bond	2700.00	
Payment on Bond	12000.00	
TOTAL BOND FUND		14700.00

RECREATION

11168.65

LIBRARY SUPPORT & SEWER SINKING

64934.29

POLICE PENSION

2350.00

ESTIMATE

24632.77

FUNDS ON HAND AND TO BE RECEIVED FROM SOURCES OTHER THAN PROPERTY LEVY:

General Fund	22732.98
Street Fund	28232.52
Bond Fund	2076.00
Library	8598.45

Taxes Collected Total--	39,563.00
Misc. Received	104,910.68

Amount to be received by tax levy -- Total 140,597.85

PURPOSED LEVIES--

Taxable property--7,861,705.00

Tabulated below to be collected in current year and amounts collected in each of the previous years:

1954	1955	1956	1957
TOTAL 82,760.68	108,119.80	97,282.24	128,371.44

Haskel Doan
Ralph Cox
Charles Colyer
Wendell Mattingly
Trustee